

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

Devarim

INNUENDO

"And these are the words..." (1:1)

A person's power of self-justification knows few bounds. On Yom Kippur we all stand in shul *klopping* our chests but it's very difficult to really admit that we are guilty of what we are reading.

Often, the best way to get ourselves to admit that we have erred is in a roundabout way. A hint that triggers our own analysis of past failings is often far more effective than a full frontal assault.

In the first verse of this week's Torah reading Moshe conducts an extensive but veiled criticism of the Jewish People's conduct in the desert: "...Concerning the Wilderness..." Shortly after the Exodus, the people complained that they had been brought into the desert to starve. (Shemot 16:1-3) "...concerning the Arava..." This was where the Midianite women seduced many Jews. "...opposite the Sea of Reeds..." When the Egyptians were bearing down on the Jews and the Sea was behind them, the people complained, "Were there no graves in Egypt?" (Shemot 14:11) And when they emerged on the other side of the Sea, they complained the Egyptians had probably escaped. "...between Paran..." hints to the sin of the spies who were sent into the land of Canaan and returned with a negative report. "...and Tophel and Lavan" both refer to the complaints about the manna. "...and Chatzerot:" Korach's rebellion took place there, or Miriam slandered Moshe there. "...and Di Zahav" *Di Zahav* literally means "enough money." The Jews left Egypt with great wealth but they used it to make a golden calf. "...eleven days from Chorev..." G-d wanted the Jewish People to enter the Land as quickly as possible and miraculously, so He abbreviated a eleven day journey to just three days. In spite of this proof that G-d was leading them, they wanted spies to reassure them that they should enter the Land, and this led to the debacle of the spies.

The question arises, if Moshe was criticizing the people with veiled references, why then did he go back and spell out these self-same failings at great length in the following chapters?

Innuendo may be very good at getting through the psychological barrier of denial but by itself it is insufficient to change our behavior. Innuendo is only the breach in the wall. True change can only come from an open and detailed analysis of past failings.

To paraphrase a well-known twentieth-century philosopher: One who does not learn from the past — in great detail — is destined to repeat it — with the details subtly changed.

• Sources: based on Rashi, Rabbi Shimon Kraft

Va'etchanan

HAVING YOUR HEAD IN THE RIGHT PLACE

"...G-d is ONE." (6:4)

One of the charms of living in the Holy City of Yerushalayim is the unique sense of humor of its residents. I have the merit to *daven* in the morning alongside one such *Yerushalmi*. He is of slight build and unknowable age but I doubt he is much short of seventy-five and could be much more. The other day I noticed the tefillin on his head was slightly to one side and I said to him,

"Reb Aharon, your tefillin is not in the right place."

To which he replied, "There's nothing wrong with the tefillin — it's the head that's in the wrong place."

The most important part of being a Jew is having your head in the right place.

Twice a day, we declare our faith in the *Shema Yisrael* prayer, "Hear O Yisrael, the L-rd, our G-d, the L-rd is One." When we say the word "One" we are supposed to think for a brief moment that G-d's Oneness precludes the existence of anything else whatsoever. *Ain od milvado*. On the ultimate level, nothing, NOTHING, exists except G-d. In which case, who and where am I?

Everything we know, all knowledge, can be discussed, examined, argued about, refuted, proved, dissected, and shared. With one exception. There is one piece of knowledge that is beyond all refutation or controversy, beyond doubt and beyond proof.

And that is the certainty of my own existence.

No one can tell me that I am not here and I need no proof

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Devarim

This Parsha begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishneh Torah*, “Repetition of the Torah” (hence the Greek/English title Deuteronomy). *Sefer Devarim* relates what Moshe told *Bnei Yisrael* during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe reviews the *mitzvot*, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo: From the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe’s guidance to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua’s leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the *meraglim*. The Parsha opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they hadn’t sinned by sending spies into *Eretz Yisrael*. G-d would have given them without a fight all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results: The entire generation would die in the desert; Moshe would not enter *Eretz Yisrael*. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to G-d’s decree was to want to “go up and fight” to redress the sin; he recounts how they wouldn’t listen when he told them not to go, that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon — these lands were not to be part of the map of *Eretz Yisrael* in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

Va’etchanan

Although Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special *mitzvot*. G-d refuses. Moshe reminds *Bnei Yisrael* of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah — that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impresses on *Bnei Yisrael* that the Sinai revelation took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jews will ever claim that G-d spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins *Bnei Yisrael* to “pass over” the Sinai event to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe predicts, accurately, that when *Bnei Yisrael* dwell in *Eretz Yisrael* they will sin and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but will eventu-

ally return to G-d.

Moshe designates three “refuge cities” to which an inadvertent killer may flee. Moshe repeats the 10 Commandments and then teaches the *Shema*, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and thus forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The *parsha* ends with Moshe exhorting *Bnei Yisrael* not to intermarry when they enter *Eretz Yisrael*, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

Ekev

If *Bnei Yisrael* carefully observe even those “minor” *mitzvot* that are usually “trampled” underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations of earth. Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* that they will conquer *Eretz Canaan* little by little, so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before *Bnei Yisrael* are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning *Bnei Yisrael* to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance. Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to become haughty and think that their success in *Eretz Yisrael* is a result of their own powers or vigor; rather, it was G-d who gave them wealth and success. Nor did G-d drive out the Canaanites because of *Bnei Yisrael*’s righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites; for the road from Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against G-d and Moshe. Moshe details the events after G-d spoke the 10 Commandments at Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon’s passing is recorded as is the elevation of the *levi’im* to G-d’s ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of the heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the *Shema*, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping *mitzvot* and the curse that results from non-observance.

Re’eh

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from G-d. When the nation enters *Eretz Yisrael* they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. G-d will

choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; not to a private altar. Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in *Eretz Yisrael* meat may be slaughtered anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a “prophet” tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot. Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. *Bnei Yisrael* are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted — G-d will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee year. The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

Shoftim

Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near G-d’s altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the Halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may only have possessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two *sifrei Torah*, one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn’t become haughty. Neither the *kohanim* nor the *levi’im* are to inherit land in the Land of Israel, rather they are to be supported by the community by a system of tithes. All divination is prohibited. G-d promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe

TALMUDigest

Bava Metzia 93-99

- Arrangement for worker accepting money in place of exercising his right or that of others to eat from the produce they are working in
- The right of guards to eat from produce they are guarding
- The four types of *shomrim* (guardians) and their levels of responsibility
- Which conditions can be made that can nullify any arrangement if they are not fulfilled
- The Torah sources for the various categories of *shomrim*
- When the concept of *ba'alov imo* (the lender being in the service of the borrower) applies
- The husband's power in regard to property wife brings into marriage
- The debate between the Sage Sava and his disciples
- When owner and *shomer* disagree on whether animal was rented or borrowed
- When claiming doubt re an obligation can lead to a loss
- If animal dies while being brought to borrower by his son or agent or the son or agent of the lender
- How long does a lender have to retract on his offer to lend
- How much do movers pay for breaking a barrel of wine

THE MYSTERIOUS EXEMPTION

“If the owner is with him (the borrower) he will not be responsible for payment (if the animal dies).” This pas-

sage (*Shemot* 22:14) is the source for a puzzling exemption of responsibility for a *shomer* (guardian), which is the main topic of the ninth *perek* of our *mesechta*.

If at the time that one assumes responsibility for guarding the animal of another – whether as borrower, renter or other sort of *shomer* – the owner is serving him in some capacity, this is called “the owner is with him”. In such a case even if the borrower, whose level of responsibility is the greatest of all *shomrim*, is negligent in causing the death of the animal, he is exempt from payment.

No rationale is offered in the *gemara* for this exemption which applies to every *shomer* for every situation. It is simply accepted as a Divine decree.

In his commentary on Torah, Rabbi Ovadiah of Seforno offers the following rationale:

If the owner of the animal (or any object) feels so close to the one borrowing from him that he has placed himself at his service, we can assume that he only expects the borrower to return the animal if it is intact and waives any claim for payment if it is no longer returnable.

• *Bava Metzia 94a*

Bava Metzia 100-106

- Dispute over ownership of something sold
- When there is cause for an oath to be taken
- Olive trees purchased or received through flood

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

explains how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased's family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to “frame” a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A *kohen* is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill trust in G-d. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

Ki Tetzei

The Torah describes the only permissible way a woman captured in battle may be married. If a man marries two wives, and the less-favored wife bears a first-born son, this son's right to inherit a double portion is protected against the father's desire to favor the child of the favored wife. The penalty for a rebellious son, who will inevitably degenerate into a monstrous criminal, is stoning. A body must not be left on the gallows overnight, because it had housed a holy soul. Lost property must be returned. Men are forbidden from wearing women's clothing and vice versa. A mother bird may not be taken together with her eggs. A fence must be built around the roof of a house. It is forbidden to plant a mixture of seeds, to plow with an ox and a donkey together, or to combine wool and linen in a garment. A four-cornered garment must have twisted threads — *tzitzit* — on its corners. Laws regarding illicit relationships are detailed. When Israel goes to war, the camp must be governed by rules of spiritual purity. An escaped slave must not be returned to his master.

Taking interest for lending to a Jew is forbidden. *Bnei Yisrael* are not to make vows. A worker may eat of the fruit he is harvesting. Divorce and marriage are legislated. For the first year of marriage, a husband is exempt from the army and stays home to rejoice with his wife. Tools of labor may not be impounded, as this prevents the debtor from earning a living. The penalty for kidnapping for profit is death. Removal of the signs of the disease *tzara'at* is forbidden. Even for an overdue loan, the creditor must return the collateral daily if the debtor needs it. Workers' pay must not be delayed. The guilty may not be subjugated by punishing an innocent relative. Because of their vulnerability, converts and orphans have special rights of protection. The poor are to have a portion of the harvest. A court may impose lashes. An ox must not be muzzled while threshing. It is a mitzvah for a man to marry his brother's widow if the deceased left no offspring. Weights and measures must be accurate and used honestly. The *parsha* concludes with the mitzvah to erase the name of Amalek, for, in spite of knowing about the Exodus, they ambushed the Jewish People.

BAVA METZIA 93 - BAVA BATRA 15

- Tithing produce of a field rented from a non-Jew
- Planting trees or building house on another's property
- How long can the tenant remain when no limit was mentioned
- What must the landlord provide for the tenant
- When does someone's property acquire something for him
- Payment for rent of the extra month in a leap year
- The landlord's obligation to provide another home for the tenant if the first one collapsed
- Restrictions on sharecroppers of renters of fields
- Interpreting the terminology of ordinary people
- The dual nature of capital invested in a business
- When a sharecropper wishes to back out because the field is not producing
- When disaster strikes a rented field

THE "PROTECTIVE" MEZUZAH

If someone rents a home it is his obligation to put *mezuzot* on his doorposts and not the obligation of the landlord. Rashi cites as the source for this the *gemara* in *Mesechta Menachot* (34a) which interprets the word *beitcha* (your home) in the passage about mezuzah as *biyatcha* (your entry). This indicates that the one who enters and exits the home – the tenant – is responsible for affixing *mezuzot*.

The popular concept that the reason for the mezuzah is protection for residents of the home has a source in the story of the convert Onkeles (*Mesechta Avodah Zarah* 11a). When the Roman emperor sent troops to fetch him he succeeded in convincing them to convert as well by pointing out that in contrast to a mortal king whose servants stand out-

side his palace to protect him, the mezuzah represents G-d posted in the doorway to protect the Jews inside.

Although fulfillment of the mitzvah of mezuzah provides protection, as does the fulfillment of any mitzvah, it is wrong to assume that this is the basic reason for this mitzvah. Rambam (*Laws of Tefillin* 5:4) sharply criticizes those who view the mezuzah as some sort of protective amulet rather than a "great mitzvah reinforcing our belief in the Oneness of G-d, our love for Him and our service to Him."

• *Bava Metzia* 101b

Bava Metzia 107-113

- Ownership of a tree on border between two fields
- Blessings of proximity
- Guarding against evil eye and danger to health
- Responsibility for repair in partnership situation
- When a neighbor can demand priority of purchase
- Restrictions on use of rented field
- Rights and responsibilities of gardeners
- Dispute over length of lease in a vague contract
- Obligation to pay a worker on time
- Dispute over whether employer paid the worker
- The seriousness of withholding payment of wages
- The risks taken by the agricultural worker
- Why the worker takes the oath rather than the employer
- The rules regarding taking security for a loan

RISKING FOR A LIVELIHOOD

In its command to pay a worker on time the Torah points out that the worker is a poor man who risks his life for the employer. Our *gemara* describes the nature of this risk as

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LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

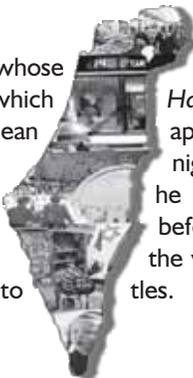
Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

ANTIPATRUS – THE GREAT CONFRONTATION

Near Petach Tikva is a hill called Antipatrus at whose base is the source of the Yarkon River which flows through Tel Aviv to the Mediterranean Sea.

This is the site where the great confrontation between the Kohen Gadol Shimon Hatzaddik and Alexander the great took place.

The Macedonian king was leading his army to



Jerusalem where he planned to destroy the *Beit Hamikdash*. But his march was intercepted by the appearance of the high priest who had marched all night to confront him. When he saw Shimon Hatzaddik he descended from his chariot and prostrated himself before him, explaining that what he saw before him was the vision that accompanied him in every one of his battles.

BAVA METZIA 93 - BAVA BATRA 15

climbing up to the top of a high tree to pick olives or dates and facing the danger of falling to his death.

This situation is certainly not a very high risk one for then it would be forbidden to endanger one's life. But even such a level of risk is permitted only for the sake of earning a livelihood.

Such is the position taken by the great halachic authority Rabbi Yechezkel Landau in his response to a question put to him whether it is permitted for a Jew to hunt wild animals as a sport. While the Torah did not forbid a Jew to take a moderate risk for the purpose of earning a livelihood – such as climbing a high tree or traveling across seas or deserts – it did not permit him to hunt for sport and face the risk of being killed by the animals he is hunting. Should the hunting be done for the purpose of livelihood, such as is done by people trading in animal skins and furs, it is permissible for the same reason that the Torah permitted the worker to risk falling from the tree.

Bava Metzia 114-119

- Confiscation of property of a debtor who defaults
- The Prophet Elyahu in a cemetery
- Who can take security for a loan and from whom
- Can interpretation of a rationale for a mitzvah affect its application
- The punishment for taking food preparation vessels as security for loan
- Lashes for violation of a multiple prohibition
- Dividing the materials of a collapsed house between two

- partners
- Responsibility for repairs of ceiling separating upstairs and downstairs belonging to different people
- When one of these two wishes to rebuild the collapsed house and the other refuses
- Responsibility for damage caused by wall or tree crashing into public domain
- Paying wages to worker from the straw in which he worked
- Using the public domain for private production
- Two gardens one atop another and something growing between them

KOHEN IN A CEMETERY

“Is the master not a *kohen* – what is he doing in a cemetery?” This is the question which the Sage Rabbah bar Avuha put to the Prophet Elyahu whom he met in a non-Jewish cemetery.

The question was based on the tradition that the prophet was actually the *kohen* Pinchas. The answer given was that according to the position of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai a *kohen* was not prohibited from being within the airspace of a grave of a non-Jew.

The problem that remains, however, is how it was possible for Elyahu to revive the dead son of the widow whose hospitality he enjoyed, which is forbidden to a *kohen*. (See *Melachim I*, 17:21) The resolution offered by Tosefot is that

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THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE STORY BEHIND THE SIDDIR

Behind the success of the *Siddur Beit Tefilah*, which is to be found in virtually every synagogue, is a fascinating story concerning its publisher, Mordechai Natan Miller.

Arriving alone in Israel from his home in Czechoslovakia as part of the Youth Aliya transport, later known as the “Yaldei Teheran Aliyah”, he was placed in the religious Kibbutz Chafetz Chaim. Recalling the wish of his deceased parents that he study Torah in the yeshiva of Rabbi Yosef Zvi Dushensky, who knew the family in the years before the war, the young orphan fled the kibbutz and came to the yeshiva in Jerusalem.

When she became aware of his move, Henrietta Szold,

the founder of Hadassah who then served as head of the Jewish Agency Youth Aliya Department, demanded that he be returned to the kibbutz. When her official request was ignored she traveled to the home of Rabbi Dushensky, determined to bring the boy back. For two hours this distinguished rabbi and rosh yeshiva tried to convince her to allow the boy to fulfill the wish of his parents. At one point he pulled out from a shelf a Torah volume that her grandfather had authored. “This boy’s parents,” he said, “wanted their son to be like your grandfather.” Not only did she allow the boy to stay but even arranged for the Jewish Agency to send Rabbi Dushensky monthly checks for his support, checks which he never cashed.

since Eliyahu was certain that Heaven would answer his prayers for restoring life to the dead child, the situation was one of saving a life for which one must put aside the restriction on a *kohen* becoming spiritually contaminated.

(A radically different approach is offered by Rabeinu Bachya in his commentary on Chumash – *Parshat Pinchas* – which is based on the assumption that the child was not Jewish and that Eliyahu did not actually touch the child, only entered his airspace by suspending himself above the child. As in the case in our *gemara*, this was permitted.)

Bava Batra 2-8

- Protecting privacy by putting a wall between neighbors
- Building materials for that wall
- Destroying a synagogue in order to build a new one
- Herod and the Sage Bava ben Buta
- The need for a wall in a garden or valley
- Exterior walls and interior ones
- Dispute over whether debt was paid
- Rights acquired as a result of unprotested continued use
- Protecting against being seen from a neighbor's roof
- Dividing inherited property
- Individual's responsibility to share expenses of community
- Which expenses are not imposed on a Torah Sage
- Priorities in support from communal charity fund

- How charity is collected and distributed

COMPARING TWO TEMPLES

Why was there a wall between the *Kodesh* and the *Kodesh HaKodoshim* (Holy and Holy of Holies) in the first *Beit Hamikdash* and only curtains to separate them in the second one?

The answer given in our *gemara* is that since that wall could not be thicker than one *amah* (cubit), the greater height of the ceiling in the second *Beit Hamikdash* made it impossible for such a thin wall to stand.

As proof that the ceiling was higher this passage is cited: "Greater will be the glory of this house than that of the first one." (*Chagai* 2:9)

One interpretation of this prophecy is that it will be a larger structure (a hundred *amot* high – Rashi).

This commentary of Rashi is challenged in a footnote of Rabbi Yoel Sirkes (commonly known as "BaCH" – abbreviation of his classic *Bayit Chadash*). He calls attention to the fact that the total height of the first *Beit Hamikdash* was actually 120 *amot*, 20 more than the total height of the second. How then could the second one be described as being "greater"?

His resolution is that the ceiling of the area of the lower level holy area (*Heichal*) was 30 *amot* high while it was 40

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A SHABBAT OF VISION

This Shabbat, the one before Tisha B'Av, is known as Shabbat Chazon because the *haftarah* that is then read in the synagogue begins with the words *Chazon Yeshayahu* (the vision of the Prophet Isaiah).

This vision is a prophecy in which the prophet chastises his people for their rebellion against G-d. While the sad tone of this prophecy serves as an introduction to the mourning of the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*, there is in it a vision of a happy end.

"If your sins will be like scarlet," the prophet comforts us in the Name of G-d, "they will whiten like snow." This optimistic tone is climaxed by the promise that "If you will be willing and obey, you shall eat the goodness of the Land."

This is the vision that must be internalized by Jews everywhere and one which will bring blessings to Israel forever.

amot high in the second, thus making it impossible to erect a thin wall as a separation.

(This approach may incidentally explain why those who remembered the first *Beit Hamikdash* wept when they saw the lower structure of the second as described in *Ezra* 3:12.)

Bava Batra 9-15

- The trust in charity wardens and ordinary treasurers
- Rules for distribution of charity funds
- The importance of giving and raising funds for charity
- Why the Sage Ulla was given a nickname
- The reward for giving charity
- Rabbi Akiva's debate with Turnus Rufus
- The other-worldly vision of Rabbi Yehoshua's son
- The charity given by non-Jews
- Dividing the properties of partners
- Prophecy versus wisdom
- Preventing the conduct of Sodom
- When there is not enough property for equal division
- The slave freed by one of his two owners
- What was in the ark of Moshe
- The order of the *sefarim* of Tanach and their authors
- All about the righteous *lyov*

THE SIN OF SODOM

When a person is so selfish that he refuses to accommodate another even though there is no loss to him, he is considered as having the character of the Sodomites whose city was utterly destroyed by Heaven.

What exactly was the sin of Sodom that earned for them such extreme retribution?

"Behold", says the Prophet Yechezkel, "this was the sin of Sodom; she and her sister cities had a proud abundance of food and enjoyed serenity, and yet did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." (16:49)

With such prosperity the Sodomites could certainly have afforded to help less fortunate people without hurting their own economy. But they chose to discourage the arrival of any newcomer to their area, except for a wealthy individual like Lot, by outlawing any charitable act and by treating strangers with depraved cruelty. Because this sort of conduct took place in the land that Israel would inherit, it was Heaven's judgment to make an example of Sodom to deter Jews from following such a corrupt culture.

In our *gemara* we are taught the court can actually compel the person acting like a Sodomite to concede to another when it is not at his expense.

• *Bava Batra 12b*

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

"Any condition made in regard to a transaction or divorce which is impossible to fulfill cannot nullify the transaction if not fulfilled."

• *Rabbi Yehuda ben Telma - Bava Metziah 94a*

"Let the field become weaker rather than the man who rented it."

• *A folk saying quoted by Rabbi Ashi - Bava Metziah 104b*

"All Jews are princes."

• *Rabbi Shimon - Bava Metziah 113b*

"Take even the coarsest material in order to collect your debt."

• *A folk saying quoted in the gemara - Bava Metziah 118a*

"You extinguished the light of the world so you must do something for the light of the world."

• *The Sage Bava ben Buta advising Herod to atone for slaying Torah Sages by renovating the Beit Hamikdash. - Bava Batra 4a*

"Whoever pursues the opportunity to give charity will be provided with money by G-d in order to do so."

• *Rabbi Yitzchak - Bava Batra 9b*

PARSHA Q&A ?

Devarim

1. How do we see from the beginning of *Parshat Devarim* that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
5. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
6. Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
7. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
8. "*Apikorsim*" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
10. Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
11. Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
12. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
13. Which city did Calev inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did G-d instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. Why did Moshe fear Og?
19. Who was instrumental in destroying the Refa'im?
20. What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Devarim's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 1:1 – Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
2. 1:2 - 40 days.
3. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
4. 1:4 – So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the land as he promised?"
5. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the *mishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
6. 1:8 - Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
7. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
8. 1:13 – They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having family problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzlofchad asked him a *halachic* question, the law was concealed from him.
11. 1:19 - Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
12. 1:23 - Levi.
13. 1:36 - Hebron.
14. 2:5 - Avraham was promised the land of ten kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered seven. The lands of Moav, Ammon and Esav will be received in the time of the *mashiach*.
15. 2:9 - This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
18. 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
19. 3:11 - Amrafel.
20. 3:18 - They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Va'etchanan

1. "And I prayed to G-d at that time." Why "at that time"?
2. What characteristic trait is represented by Hashem's "strong hand"?
3. What is ha'levanon?
4. What did G-d tell Yehoshua after the battle of Ai?
5. What will happen if the Jewish People fail to keep the mitzvot properly?
6. How did the decree that Moshe not enter the Land affect him even in death?
7. What is hinted by the word v'noshantem?
8. Why were the Jewish People exiled two years earlier than indicated by Moshe's prophecy?
9. "You'll serve man-made gods." Is this literal?
10. Why is east called mizrach?
11. "Keep the Shabbat day as I have commanded you."
When had G-d previously commanded us to keep Shabbat?
12. Where did the Jewish People first receive the command to honor parents?
13. What is meant by "G-d, our G-d, G-d is One"?
14. What are two meanings of loving G-d "with all your might"?
15. How well-versed must one be in Torah?
16. Where does the word totafot come from?
17. Who is fit to swear in Hashem's name?
18. What does it mean that the Jews are the "smallest nation"?
19. When someone serves G-d with love, how many generations receive reward?
20. Why are evil-doers rewarded in this world?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Va'etchanan's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 3:23 - Defeating Sichon and Og, whose lands were part of Eretz Canaan, Moshe thought perhaps G-d had annulled the vow against his entering the Land.
2. 3:24 - His willingness to forgive.
3. 3:25 - Ha'levanon means the Beit Hamikdash, which makes "white" (lavan), i.e., atones for, the Jewish People.
4. 3:28 - Yehoshua must lead the army into battle.
5. 4:9 - The non-Jewish world will regard them as foolish.
6. 4:22 - Even his remains weren't buried in the Land.
7. 4:25 - The gematria of v'noshantem, 852, hints at the number of years until the first exile.
8. 4:25 - So that the rest of the prophecy "that you shall utterly perish" would not be fulfilled.
9. 4:28 - No. It means you'll serve others who serve idols.
10. 4:41 - It's the direction from which the sun shines (mizrach means shining).
11. 5:13 - Before Matan Torah, at Marah. (Shmot 15:25)
12. 5:16 - At Marah. (Shmot 15:25).
13. 6:4 - G-d, who is now our G-d, but not [accepted as] G-d of the other nations, will eventually be [accepted as] the one and only G-d.
14. 6:5 - 1) With everything you own. 2) Whether G-d treats you with kindness or harshness.
15. 6:7 - If asked a Torah question, one should be able to reply quickly and clearly.
16. 6:8 - Tot means two in Caspi. Fot means two in Afriki. Together they allude to the four sections of tefillin.
17. 6:13 - One who serves G-d and reveres His name.
7:7 - B'nei Yisrael are the humblest nation.
7:9 - 2,000.
7:10 - So that they get no reward in the next world.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

Ekev

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that G-d will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the: a. wonders b. strong hand c. outstretched arm that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a *mitzvah*, whose name is attached to the *mitzvah*?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the *midbar*?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the *midbar*?
6. How many days did Moshe spend on Mt. Sinai altogether?
7. On what day did Moshe come down from Mt. Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the Jewish People?
8. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?
9. Who made the ark in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
10. Which sin of the Jewish People was prompted by the death of Aharon?
11. Why were the *levi'im* chosen by G-d?
12. Why do the *levi'im* have no portion in the land?
13. All aspects of man's life are in Hashem's "hands" except one. What is this?
14. What is the "added benefit" of observing the *mitzvot*?
15. What is meant by circumcising one's heart?
16. What are the sources of water for the fields of Egypt and *Eretz Yisrael*?
17. What path does the Torah prescribe for gaining new knowledge?
18. Which activity is "serving G-d with the heart"?
19. When the Jewish People sin, why are they considered worse than the generation of the flood?
20. How does one "cleave to G-d"?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Ekev's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 7:12 - Guard even the "light" commandments.
2. 7:19 - The: a. Plagues; b. Pestilence; c. Slaying of the firstborn.
3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
4. 8:4 - The *ananei kavod* (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.
6. 9:18 - 120 days.
7. 9:18 - The tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur.
8. 9:20 - His two sons died.
9. 10:1 - Moshe. This ark would accompany the Jewish People into battle.
10. 10:6-7 - When Aharon died the *ananei kavod* departed, causing many Jews to fear war with the King of Arad and to retreat toward Egypt.
11. 10:8 - Because they did not participate in the sin of the golden calf.
12. 10:9 — Since they served in the Temple, thus they were not free to work the land.
13. 10:12 - Fear of Heaven, which is dependent upon the person.
14. 10:13 - There is reward.
15. 10:16 - To remove those things that block the words of Torah from entering.
16. 11:10 - Egypt is irrigated by manually carrying water up from the Nile. *Eretz Yisrael* is supplied by rainwater requiring no work on the part of its inhabitants.
17. 11:13 - By repeatedly reviewing what one knows, one more easily acquires new knowledge.
18. 11:13 - Prayer.
19. 11:17 - Because the generation of the flood had no one from whom to learn.
20. 11:22 - Attaching oneself to Torah scholars.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Re'eh

1. What were the sites designated for the “blessings and the curses” to be pronounced by the people?
2. On what condition will *Bnei Yisrael* receive the blessings from G-d?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that G-d commanded?
4. What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
5. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
6. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
7. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of *kedusha* (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
8. Why was the tribe of Yehuda not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
9. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?
10. Why were the Jewish People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?
11. What forms of idol worship are punishable by death?
12. If a person performs miracles in the name of G-d and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
13. The Torah says, “to Him (G-d) you shall cleave.” How does one fulfill this command?
14. The trial of a person accused of encouraging others to worship idols differs from the trial of other capital cases. How?
15. Who has the primary responsibility of inflicting the punishment on one who tried to entice others to worship idols?
16. What is the “source” of the Jewish People being an *am kadosh* (holy nation)?
17. How should the Jewish People maintain themselves as an *am kadosh*?
18. What is the order of priority regarding to whom one should give charity?
19. What *mitzvah* recalls the Exodus from Egypt?
20. Which four individuals are under Hashem’s “special protection”?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Re'eh's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval, respectively.
2. 11:27 - On condition that they listen to G-d's commandments.
3. 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah.
4. 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River.
5. 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.
6. 12:15 - They must be redeemed and may then be eaten.
7. 12:15 - Eating it is permitted, but use of its milk or fleece is forbidden.
8. 12:17 - When Avraham bought *ma'arat hamachpelah*, he made a covenant of peace with the Hittites who sold it; his descendants honored this pact regarding the Hittite descendants in Jerusalem.
9. 12:24-25 - Blood that seeps slowly from the incision as soon as the cut is made and again after it no longer gushes. Blood absorbed into the limbs of the animal.
10. 12:30 - To learn not to follow in their depraved ways.
11. 12:30 - Slaughtering or burning a sacrifice on an altar, pouring libations, prostrating oneself, and any normal manner of worshipping that idol.
12. 13:2-6 - He is put to death.
13. 13:5 - One should emulate Hashem's actions by performing good deeds, assisting in burying the dead and visiting the sick.
14. 13:10 - If he was acquitted and new information of a condemning nature arises, he is retried. If he was judged guilty, he is not returned to court to plead in his favor.
15. 13:10 - The person whom the guilty one attempted to entice.
16. 14:2 - The *kedusha* is inherited from the *avot*.
17. 14:21 - By avoiding excesses even in permitted matters.
18. 15:7 - The most needy, a brother from one's father, a brother from one's mother, the poor of one's city, the poor of another city.
19. 16:3 - Eating the *korban pesach* and the *matzah* on the night of Pesach.
20. 16:10 - A *levi*, convert, orphan, and widow.

Shoftim

1. What is the role of *shoftim*? What is the role of *shotrim*?
 2. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
 3. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
 4. What is the source for the concept “seek out a good *beit din*”?
 5. Although the *avot* built *matzevot*, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
 6. “You will come to...the judge who will be in those days.” It’s impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
 7. What does G-d promise a king who doesn’t amass much gold, doesn’t raise many horses and doesn’t marry many wives?
 8. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
 9. How was King Shaul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Shmuel?
 10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of “*chazeh, shok and keiva*.” Which ones?
11. Families of *kohanim* served in the *Beit Hamikdash* on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system implemented?
 12. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
 13. What does it mean to “prepare the way” to the cities of refuge?
 14. How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word *eid* (witness)?
 15. “Through the mouth of two witnesses....” What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
 16. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be *zomemim* (false-conspirators) before their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
 17. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
 18. The Jewish army is warned of four “scare-tactics” the enemy might employ. What are they?
 19. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?
 20. What happens if the murderer is found after the calf’s neck was broken?

Answers to Shoftim’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 16:18 - *Shoftim* are judges who pronounce judgment. *Shotrim* are officers who enforce it.
2. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
3. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
4. 16:20 - “*Tzedek tzedek tirdof...*”
5. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
6. 17:9 - To teach that although a judge may not be as eminent as judges of previous generations, we must obey him nevertheless.
7. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.
8. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
9. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
10. 18:3 - *Chayot* (non-domestic-type animals).
11. 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn’t hear, something told to another prophet, or prophecies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post direction signs saying “refuge” at the crossroads.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony and testimony translated from a language which the judges don’t understand.
16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute fair judgment they will be victorious in war.
18. 20:3 - a. Clanging their shields b. Making their horses stomp and whinny c. Shouting d. Blowing horns.
19. 21:2 - The Sanhedrin.
20. 21:9- He is tried and, if guilty, executed.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Ki Tetzei

1. Why must a captured woman mourn her family for a month in her captor's house?
2. What fraction of the inheritance does a first-born receive if he has a) one brother? b) two brothers?
3. What will become of a *ben sorer u'moreh* if his parents don't bring him to court?
4. Why is it a degradation to G-d to hang a criminal's body on the gallows overnight?
5. What do you do if you find a lost object that costs money to maintain?
6. Why does the Torah forbid wearing the clothing of the opposite gender?
7. Why does the Torah link the mitzvah of sending away the mother-bird with the mitzvah of making a railing on the roof of your house?
8. What mixture of wool and linen is permitted to be worn?
9. What three things happen to a man who falsely slanders his bride?
10. Although the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish People, the Torah allows marriage with their third-generation converts. Why?
11. Why is causing someone to sin worse than killing him?
12. If one charges interest to his fellow Jew, how many commandments has he transgressed?
13. What is the groom's special obligation to his bride during their first year together?
14. When is a groom required to fight in a non-obligatory war?
15. What type of object may one not take as collateral?
16. "Remember what G-d did to Miriam." To what event does the Torah refer?
17. If a poor person finds money, the one who lost it receives a blessing. From where do we derive this?
18. Who has the primary obligation to perform *yibum*?
19. Which two people in this week's *Parsha* are required to speak in *Lashon Hakodesh*?
20. How does the Torah describe those who cheat in business?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Ki Tetzei's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 21:13 - So her captor will find her unattractive.
2. 21:17 - a) 2/3 b) 1/2
3. 21:22 - He will eventually rob and kill to support his physical indulgences.
4. 21:23 - Because humans are made in Hashem's image, and because the Jewish People are Hashem's children.
5. 22:2 - Sell it and save the money for the owner.
6. 22:5 - It leads to immorality.
7. 22:8 - To teach that one mitzvah leads to another, and to prosperity.
8. 22:12 - Wool *tzitzit* on a linen garment.
9. 22:18 - He receives lashes, pays a fine of 100 silver *selah*, and may never divorce her against her will.
10. 23:8 - Because they hosted Yaakov and his family during the famine.
11. 23:9 - Murder takes away life in this world, while causing someone to sin takes away his life in the World to Come.
12. 23:21 - Three; two negative commandments and a positive commandment.
13. 24:5 - To gladden her.
14. 24:5 - When he remarries his ex-wife.
15. 24:6 - Utensils used to prepare food.
16. 24:9 - G-d punishing Miriam with *tzara'at* for speaking *lashon harah*.
17. 24:19 - From the mitzvah to leave the "forgotten bundle" for the poor.
18. 25:6 - The eldest brother.
19. 25:8 - The *yavam* (brother-in-law) and the *yavamah* (his childless brother's widow).
20. 25:16 - "An abomination (*to'evah*) to G-d."

GUEST ETIQUETTE

From: Marsha

*Dear Rabbi,
My husband and I (we were recently married) will be traveling during the summer break and we will be staying with family and friends for various lengths of times. Does the Torah offer any advice on how to be good guests that we should keep in mind?*

Dear Marsha and Husband,

Mazal tov on your recent marriage. I wish you a pleasant vacation together.

Jewish sources do, in fact, discuss how to be a good guest.

The Talmud makes an interesting statement: One who wants to derive benefit from his host should do so as Elisha the Prophet benefited; one who does not want to benefit from his host should do as Samuel the Prophet avoided receiving benefit (Berachot 10b).

The events referred to are as follows:

The Tanach describes a certain woman who urged the prophet Elisha (not knowing at the time that he was a prophet) to accept her hospitality. The prophet agreed to eat bread, and from then on would turn in to his hosts' home when passing by. Eventually, the woman told her husband that this seems to be a holy man, and that they should prepare a special room for him to use while on his journeys in which they placed a bed, table, chair and lamp.

Later, the prophet was told that the couple had no children. In appreciation of their hospitality, he blessed them, and after many years of barrenness, they had a son. Elisha took special interest in the boy, and, after the lad suddenly died, Elisha made a special journey to their home and miraculously brought him back to life.

The Talmud infers that the Shunamite woman had to press Elisha to accept their hospitality, and even once he did, he only ate bread. This shows that he went out of his way to avoid burdening his hosts. Similarly, the fact that they pre-

pared for him a small room that was only sparsely furnished also suggests that they realized this was all he'd accept, and offering any more might make him uncomfortable. On the other hand, while he took little, he gave a lot. Not only did he effect their having a child, he saved the boy's life.

From here the Talmud teaches that someone who derives benefit from his hosts should only do so sparingly, and avoid doing or saying anything that might make them go out of their way for him. Of course, every person and situation is different (for example, parents generally enjoy providing even for their grown children and such a "child" should graciously, with moderation, give the parents the joy of giving) but in general, this is the spirit behind being a good guest: take only a little and give a lot.

This includes lessening the burden of hosting you as much as possible by doing your own cleaning, laundry, cooking, dishes etc. while helping your hosts in any way you can beyond things directly related to you – just to help them with some need of their own whether it be fixing something, mowing the lawn or whatever might be a special way of giving more than you take.

The other instance mentioned in the above teaching is regarding Samuel the Prophet of whom the Talmud notes that on his journeys throughout the country to teach and inspire the people, he literally carried anything he would need with him from home in order to avoid troubling anyone on his behalf.

From here the Sages instruct us that one should bring as much of his own belongings with him in order to avoid using those of his host and to spare him embarrassment or difficulty in acquiring them if he doesn't have. Here too each situation is different, but even if a person can't carry all he needs, he should still make an effort to buy upon arriving at least what he'll consume during his visit, and preferably leave behind more than what he used. This would apply to food, toiletries, fuel and the like. Of course, in addition to this, a nice gift for the hosts as a token of appreciation is a must.

In this way, you'll make it easier to host you, benefit your hosts in ways they'll appreciate, and hopefully increase their appreciation for the Torah and its ways.

To our Ohrnet Readers
A Happy and Safe Summer
www.ohr.edu

CONVERSATION AT THE CHECKOUT COUNTER

Question: A long line of people is waiting to be served at the checkout counter of a supermarket. The line has stopped moving as fast as it should because one of the shoppers is carrying on a friendly conversation with the person at the cash register. I'm not sure whose fault it is but all of us behind this gabfest are very upset. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Both the shopper and clerk are responsible for your inconvenience and there is definitely something you can and should do.

Harboring an unspoken hatred for both parties guilty of gabbing at your expense will achieve nothing more than

your becoming guilty of violating the Torah prohibition against hating someone in your heart. The right thing to do is to gently communicate to the conversers that you and others in the line feel it is unfair for them to carry on their conversation at your expense. The Torah's recipe for avoiding hatred of others is to reprove them by calling to their attention the fact that they have hurt you. This gives the other person a chance to either explain that he was unaware of doing any harm or at least to apologize for doing so.

If your call to the conversers at the checkout counter is done in a gentle, unoffending manner the line will get moving with no one being hurt.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

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that I exist. The truth of my own existence is irrefutable and intuitive, beyond all logic or discussion. It is the deepest form of knowledge, and deeper than knowledge itself.

Which means that really the only thing I can really be sure of is me. Maybe the rest of the world, everything outside that intuitive knowledge of my own existence is no more than a giant super-duper I-MAX experience. Maybe the world is no more than a vastly sophisticated Disneyworld.

The tool that G-d has given us to turn "Nothing exists except me," into "Nothing exists except Him," is the *Shema*.

In the *Shema*, we are *moser nefesh*, literally we "give over our souls". This doesn't just mean that we are prepared to give up our lives rather than betray our faith. It means that in the *Shema* we give over the irrefutable certainty of own own existence and declare that that we are no more than just one expression of what G-d wishes to reveal in His world. The *Shema* makes our belief in G-d's existence as deep-rooted and unshakable as the knowledge of our own existence.

Throughout the ages the *Shema* has given Jews the power to make the ultimate sacrifice; simple Jews who were not great philosophers, ordinary people who said *Shema* as they took leave of this world, understanding that their own lives were none other than G-d's expression of Himself in this world, and they were now returning that to Him.

It all depends on having your head in the right place.

Ekev

THE INK OF ETERNITY

"Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones." (10:1)

Michelangelo may have known a thing or two about painting, but when it came to Jewish anatomy he was a bit off. When he painted Moses he gave him little horns. Michelangelo problem came from a mis-translation of the Hebrew word *keren*. It's true, *keren* does mean a 'horn', but it also means a ray of light. The English word *corona*, meaning a glowing halo, is probably a derivation of *keren*.

How did Moshe get his 'horns'?

After the Jewish People heard the Ten Commandments at Sinai, Moshe ascended the mountain on the 7th of Sivan to receive the rest of the Torah. He came down on the 17th of Tammuz and was greeted by the sight of the golden calf. Moshe smashed the two tablets of the Torah to the ground.

These first tablets were made by G-d and were engraved by G-d. They contained all the Torah, the *gemaras* and the *agaditas* etc., and everything that was necessary to carry out The Maker's instructions. For example, the first tablets included all the details of how to make tefillin such as the tefillin had to be perfectly square black boxes made from the hide of a kosher animal. Similarly, it was on these two tablets that G-d inscribed all the minutiae of the laws of Shabbat.

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However, when G-d gave Moshe the second tablets, they only contained the written Torah. The detailed instructions — the Oral Torah — was given to him verbally.

After G-d forgave the Jewish People their infidelity with the golden calf, Moshe ascended the mountain again on the first of Elul to receive the second tablets. He came down 40 days later on Yom Kippur. When the Children of Israel saw Moshe, his face was shining with a radiant corona.

Why didn't Moshe's face shine before?

The Midrash says that when Moshe had finished writing the Torah, some of the ink that was left over in his pen touched his face, and that's where the radiance came from. However, the Torah itself says the rays of light came from speaking to G-d. But Moshe spoke to G-d many times before, so why only now did his face become luminescent?

And which was the real cause of the aura? The ink in the pen or speaking to G-d?

One would think that the second giving of the Torah was a second-class affair. After all, the first tablets were written by G-d on rock hewn by G-d, whereas the second tablets were the work of man, and only the writing was Divine.

It sounds like the first giving was on higher level, doesn't it?

Really the reverse is true. When G-d first gave the Torah the Jewish People were to be the vessel that would contain the Torah. Like the Holy Ark, we would hold the Torah, but we would not be *part* of the Torah, just as a box only contains what is inside it. It's not the thing itself.

But with the second tablets, the Jewish People became part of the Torah itself.

The beams that came from the ink that was left in the pen of Moshe was the Oral Torah. G-d put into the mind of Moshe Rabbeinu — the rabbi, the teacher of Israel — the Oral Torah. All the verbal instructions that were originally written on the first Tablets were now engraved in the mind and heart of Moshe. Everything that is possible for a mortal understanding to attain was written in the mind of Moshe. The ink of eternity in the pen of Moshe was one and the same as G-d talking to him.

Thus, the Jewish People became *partners* in the Torah. We became the parchment on which G-d wrote with the ink of eternity.

Re'eh

GURU SHMURU

"For there will arise in your midst a prophet..." (13:2)

In this week's Torah portion there is an uncanny warning about a situation that we ourselves are witnessing today. We live in an era where many Jews are a prey to the missionaries of other religions. The Torah warns us about three

ways that a person can be enticed away from Judaism.

He can be blinded by the charisma of a star, a celebrity, or a 'guru' who seems far-sighted. Through sheer force of personality, such a person can lure Jews away from Judaism. The Torah warns us about this form of enticement when it says, *"Do not listen to the words of that prophet."* (13:4)

Sometimes a sibling can turn a person away from Judaism: *"Judaism has nothing to offer. Look I'm your brother. Listen to me. Why don't you come for a weekend retreat with the 'Master'? I promise you it will be okay. Who needs telephones anyway?"* Against this form of attack the Torah tells us *"If your brother...or your son or your daughter or (your) wife ...or your friend who is like your own soul should entice you secretly saying 'Let us go and worship the gods of others ...from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth ...do not accede to him and to not listen to him..."* (13:7)

The third attack is the onslaught of peer pressure — not wanting to be out of step in the march of the masses. Fashions in ideas are as transitory as fashions in clothes. The dedicated follower of fashion is a prey to every new 'ism' that comes along. He's at the mercy of the mind of the mob. Corresponding to this form of brainwashing, the Torah says *"Lawless men have emerged from your midst, and they have caused the dwellers of their city to go astray saying 'Let us go and worship the gods of others...' "* (13:15)

Shoftim

LIVING LINKS

"And you will come to the priests, the Leviim, and the judge who will be in those days." (17:9)

Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi was extremely sensitive to the smell of garlic and could not tolerate its odor. Once, he was teaching a group of students. He paused, the smell of garlic reaching his nose... "Would the student who ate garlic kindly leave the room?" he asked. Not just one, but many students left. One of them was Rabbi Chiya.

The next day Rabbi Shimon (Rabbi Yehuda's son) chided Rabbi Chiya for his lack of consideration in eating garlic before attending the lecture. Rabbi Chiya replied "I didn't eat any garlic. The reason I left was that so the offender should not have to be embarrassed by revealing himself."

Where did Rabbi Chiya learn the need for this sensitivity to the feelings of others? The Talmud teaches us that Rabbi Chiya learned this behavior from seeing Rabbi Meir conduct himself in a similar way. And from whom did Rabbi Meir learn it? From Shmuel HaKatan. And Shmuel? From Schania in the Book of Ezra. And Schania learned it from Yehoshua, who learned from Moshe Rabbeinu.

Why didn't the Talmud skip all those generations and just get to the point? Why didn't it just say, "Rabbi Chiya learned his sensitivity and noble behavior from Moshe Rabbeinu?"

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We stand at the end of an unbroken chain of generations. A chain of generations that stretches back ultimately to Moshe Rabbeinu and a moment of supreme contact with G-d on Sinai. *But our contact with that moment is with the great Torah Sages of our own generation.* There are no “missing links” in the chain of the Torah. For every rabbi is a student of his rabbi.

When we seek wisdom and direction, we need look no further than our own living links to the past.

• Source: Based on Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz

Ki Teitze

THE SIN OF THE CHEESE DANISH

“An Ammoni or Moavi may not enter the congregation of G-d, even to their tenth generation, they may not enter into the congregation of G-d forever. The reason is they did not come out to meet you with bread and water on the way, when you were leaving Egypt.” (23:4-5).

What was so terrible about Ammon and Moav not coming out to meet the Bnei Yisrael with bread and water on their way out of Egypt? Just because they didn’t rush out to meet the Jewish People with ‘cheese Danish and coffee’? Is that such a terrible sin?

Even an Egyptian may convert and, after three generations, marry a Jew. And their ancestors used Jewish children

for bricks in their palaces and mausoleums! Just because of a lack of hospitality an Ammoni and a Moavi can never join the Jewish people?

The reason is that the Ammoni and the Moavi peoples owe their very existence to the Jews. For it was Avraham Avinu — the father of the Jewish People — who rescued Lot from being killed when Sodom was destroyed. Lot was the father of Ammon and Moav. Were it not for Avraham there would never have been an Ammoni or Moavi nation. When the people of Ammon and Moav didn’t come out to greet the Jewish People, the descendants of Avraham, they showed the essence of their character — lack of gratitude.

Ingratitude cannot be allowed to infiltrate the Jewish People, because to give thanks — to admit that one is beholden — is the essence of being Jewish. The word *Yehudi* is from the root to give thanks, to be grateful. When looking for a spouse this can be a yardstick for us: If chronic ingratitude makes a person unfit as a marriage partner, then, necessarily, the greatest ‘catch’ is someone who is always grateful.

An ingrate is impossible to make happy. But someone who is always grateful, who sees everything as a gift — that’s the easiest person in the world to make happy.

That’s the ideal spouse.

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